NEWS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT OPINION



STAR-STUDDED NIGHTS AT NORTHERN QUEST
SEE FULL LINEUP

EDUCATION

MARCH 3, 2016 12:09 PM

Donation to CBC nuclear program pays for new simulation equipment



Columbia Basin College students Matt Knoke, left, and Kyle Thomas run through a demonstration of a new radiation simulation system purchased for the school's nuclear technology program. The monitor tracks where the students are during a simulation anywhere in the program's lab area. **Ty Beaver** - Tri-City Herald



BY TY BEAVER

tbeaver@tricityherald.com

A \$32,000 donation from a Hanford contractor means new equipment for nuclear technology students at Columbia Basin College, giving them better training to avoid radiation exposure.

The money from Washington River Protection Solutions was combined with \$80,000 from the college's nuclear technology fund to buy the Q-Track simulation system.

The new technology installed in February allows instructors and students to simulate radiation conditions throughout the entire lab space rather than just a small area.

"It's cutting edge. It's like a flight simulator for a pilot," student Kyle Thomas, who will graduate this spring, said after a Thursday demonstration. "Before it was kind of like playing cowboys and Indians."

66

IT'S CUTTING EDGE. IT'S LIKE A FLIGHT SIMULATOR FOR A PILOT.

Kyle Thomas, CBC student

Officials with WRPS and the college lauded the program for filling the need for qualified workers in the nuclear industry, also noting that the public-private partnership has allowed it to thrive.

"It's not just for my company or my parent company," Mark Lindholm, president of WRPS, said of the donation. "This kind of training will serve you well no matter what you do in the future."

The nuclear technology program, which currently has 43 first- and second-year students, began in 2009 after CBC worked with those in the industry to establish it. WRPS has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to the program since those early days.

"Nuclear safety is paramount and our students are being trained with this in mind," said Dawn Alford, director of the nuclear program.

66

NUCLEAR SAFETY IS PARAMOUNT AND OUR STUDENTS ARE BEING TRAINED WITH THIS IN MIND.

Dawn Alford, director of CBC nuclear program

Students don't handle live radioactive material as part of their education, relying instead on simulated radioactive environments.

The need for a more expansive systems such as the Q-Track was determined about five years ago but CBC President Rich Cummins said the college alone doesn't have the resources to enhance the program's equipment on that scale. That led to WRPS stepping in to help cover the cost.

Students previously used Geiger counters that simulated radiation detection in part of the lab. Now, the computer-based Q-Track system can expand that simulation and also track student movements on a large monitor.

6

IT'S NOT JUST THE LOCAL NEED WE'RE TAKING CARE OF. IT'S THE GLOBAL NEED.

Rich Cummins, CBC president

"It's huge because it's going to let us have real time practice," said Thomas, who already has an internship at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland waiting for him when he graduates.

Lindholm noted his company, which oversees the Hanford site's tank farm, currently employs 10 people who have graduated from the CBC program. But he and others stressed that it has a far greater benefit than just for the Tri-Cities.

"It's not just the local need we're taking care of. It's the global need," Cummins said.



VIDEOS



Combat veterans visit Highlands Middle